

Finance Board Meeting Minutes: April 24th, 2014

Attendees: *George McCormack, Bill Previdi, Rachel Meredith-Warren, Russ Wilson, Dava Kilbride, Caroline Colarusso, Julie Desimone, Ben Caggiano; Stephen Dapkiewicz, Devon Manchester, George Georgountzos*

Mr. Previdi sitting in for Mr. Georountzos as chair called the meeting to order at 7:35, shortly after Mr. Georgountzos entered and assumed the chair.

Mr. Georgountzos invited Fire Chief Rolli to present the Fire Dept. budget and other data. The Chief explained the fluctuation in several revenue generating services as well as common types of calls. Ms. Colorusso asked with the new developments that could possibly coming online was there enough capacity to do their job. Chief Rolli explained the Department has a ladder that can read five stories. Chief Rolle stated that the number of fire fighters per shift has decreased from 10 to 8 in the 30 years he has been with the force. Furthermore, the \$1.3 million budget allotment for a new fire truck was going to be used to repurpose an existing one due to the height restrictions in the current Fire House and would cost significantly less. Chief Rolli said the town needed to invest in a new Fire House in the next 20 years as the new standards for fire trucks call for higher suspension.

Mr. McCormack noted the increased in medical aid calls, and suggested this number was likely to rise with the number of baby boomers aging. He asked if there had been any discussion to move EMS in house, with over 1,600 calls there is a lot of insurance dollars to be gained. Chief Rolli said that to do this effectively it would probably include laying off fire fighters and hiring lower paid EMT's like Billerica does. Chief Rolli said he was always looking to increase staff, and he has done a tremendous amount of work on grants allowing the force to stay current in several key areas at no cost to the town. Ms. Colarusso noted the great job that the Department does and thanked the Chief.

Mr. Georgountzos invited Police Chief McIntyre to the table to discuss the Police Department budget and other items. The Chief passed out material in regards to his budget and the crime statistics. He noted the homicide case that was drug related took up \$17k in overtime. There was an overage in the OT that Mr. Previdi noted, it appeared to be \$58k. Chief McIntyre articulated that it was due to the high number of officers that were out to due to medical procedures, military deployment, family leave, and injuries on calls. He stated that it is hard to avoid OT with such a short staff. He requested three more officers and the funds to send them to the academy, a result of over \$165k. Mr. McCormack asked about the opiate epidemic and the Chief said that it was a problem in every town across the commonwealth. Mr. McCormack asked about the allotment of funds for tasers that had passed in the FY14 budget and Chief McIntyre said that they were still on track, but not yet in use. Ms. Colorusso asked if the increase uptick in certain crimes has to do with drug use particularly opiates, and the Chief concurred.

Mr. Wilson noted that there would be thousands of new residents coming into town with the addition of several apartment developments and asked how it would affect staffing. Chief McIntyre responded that adequate staffing and having continuity is paramount. Mr. Wilson went on to explain the need for more funding for Police and that it is a matter of public safety. He

stated that things need to get done and it's not about where are we going to find the money but we are going to find it.

The board moved to discuss the Special Town meeting articles. Mr. Wilson noted that Mr. Maisano the resident responsible for three of the four articles is was not present. The board decided to move forward and vote on Article 1 of the Special Town Meeting, to create a "Fuel Committee" that would be tasked with planning the future needs and infrastructure of new energy such as natural gas. Mr. Manchester made a recommendation in favor and was seconded by Mr. Wilson, it passed unanimously.

The board moved to go back to the regular and take votes.

Article 18. – to see if the town will dispose of via sale a parcel of land next to JJ. Grimsby's aka Jerry Jingle park.

Mr. Previdi made a motion to recommend favorable action, Mr. Manchester seconded and it passed with two abstentions from Mr. Wilson and Ms. Colorusso.

Ms. Felch stated that she has concerns about Article 8. – to allow the school department to use excess dollars from over budgeting windows at the Robin Hood School on upgrading and installing school security systems. Ms. Felch said she felt the money should go back to the capital committee to make a decision on the top priority item. She went on to say she regrets her vote and would like to reconsider. Mr. Wilson made a motion to reconsider Article 8 and it was seconded by Mr. Dapkiewicz. Discussion began which included this policy change would need to apply to the DPW article concerning using dollars for garage doors. However, Ms. Meredith – Warren said she would like to hold off to get more information. Mr. Georgountzos mentioned that he had arranged a meeting with the school committee for the following week and that the board would be able to ask them about this article. Mr. Wilson stated that what Mr. Georgountzos was saying was starting to sound political and he was disturbed. Mr. Georgountzos explained it was not political, he worked with Ms. McNeil of the school committee to arrange the meeting. Mr. Wilson retorted that the chairman of the school subcommittee, Ms. Meredith-Warren is not a political chair and the eleven members of the board are equal. Ms. Meredith-Warren denied she was chair. She stated that her two requests to the School Committee to meet were denied so she escalated to the chairman, Mr. Georgountzos. Mr. Wilson, said there is no hierarchy, there is no escalation. Ms. Meredith –Warren said Mr. Wilson was "mischaracterizing." Mr. Georgountzos stated he thought it was important to meet with the School Committee and that's what he is trying to do.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:10 PM

Respectfully,

George McCormack